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THE MOTHER OF JESUS

HER PROBLEMS AND HER GLORY

A. T. ROBERTSON
D.D., LITT. D.

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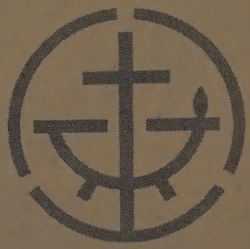

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THE MOTHER OF JESUS: Her Problems and Her Glory

A. T. ROBERTSON, D.D., LITT.D.

By PROFESSOR A. T. ROBERTSON

The Mother of Jesus: Her Problems and Her Glory.
An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament.
The Christ of the Logia.
The Minister and His Greek New Testament.
A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ.
Syllabus for New Testament Study.
Types of Preachers in the New Testament.
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BY

A. T. ROBERTSON, D.D., LITT.D. 1863-1934.

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, LOUISVILLE, KY.

"My Soul doth magnify the Lord"

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THE MOTHER OF JESUS: HER PROBLEMS AND HER GLORY
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TO
THE MEMORY OF
TWO MOTHERS
ELLA MARTIN ROBERTSON
CHARLOTTE ELEANOR BROADUS

PREFACE

I have felt for many years that Mary the Mother of Jesus has not had fair treatment from either Protestants or Catholics. One cannot write of her without facing the keenest problems of modern criticism. In this little book the effort is made to look through Mary's eyes and with a bit of Mary's heart at the great and glorious part that she was called upon to play in the world's crowning event. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the central fact of all history. Mary is entitled to our sympathy and to our understanding as far as we can give them to her.

A. T. R.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	MISUNDERSTOOD THROUGH THE AGES	13
II	MARY'S PREPARATION FOR HER DESTINY	14
III	MARY CARRYING HER SECRET IN HER HEART	17
IV	JOSEPH'S DOUBT ABOUT MARY	21
V	JOSEPH TAKING SUSPICION ON HIMSELF TO PROTECT MARY	24
VI	IS JOSEPH THE ACTUAL FATHER OF JESUS?	26
VII	THE GREAT EVENT AND THE FIRST INTERPRETATIONS	33
VIII	MARY WATCHING THE CHILD GROW	38
IX	MARY PUZZLED OVER HER BOY	41
X	MARY'S JOY AND PRIDE IN HER BOY	45
XI	MARY'S FEARS	50
XII	THE SWORD THROUGH MARY'S HEART	56
XIII	MARY'S CONSOLATION	62
XIV	THE ADORATION OF MARY BY ROMAN CATHOLICS	67
XV	NEGLECT OF MARY BY PROTESTANTS	69
XVI	SYMPATHY WITH MARY	70

THE MOTHER OF JESUS:
Her Problems and Her Glory

Chapter I

MISUNDERSTOOD THROUGH THE AGES

It is plain to any dispassionate student that Mary, the mother of Jesus, has been the victim of circumstances that have obscured her real character. It is always difficult to interpret properly a person of great prominence during his life and often afterwards. Ignorance, prejudice, knowledge, play their parts, often in conflict and to the obscuration of the truth. In the case of Mary the attitude of men towards Jesus has had a most important influence.

It is not possible to consider Mary apart from Jesus. What we can do is to put ourselves, as far as possible, in Mary's position and to go with her step by step as she faces the greatest privilege and problems that have come to any woman. We can at least give Mary human sympathy and understanding.

Chapter II

Mary's Preparation for Her Destiny

Luke tells the story of the interview of the Angel Gabriel with Mary with matchless delicacy and grace. She knew, of course, as did all Jewish maidens, that one day the Messiah of promise would gladden the heart of the mother chosen for that high mission. But she had not taken this honour to herself. The greeting of the angel was so unusual that Mary was at once perplexed. She was called "highly favoured." The explanation by the angel lifted the veil of anxiety. "No longer fear, Mary; for you have found favour with God. And, behold, you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. This one shall be great and he shall be called Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:30-33). The Messianic promise is thus pre-

sented to Mary with full force and with all its wealth of privilege and power. It was enough to overwhelm the mind and heart of any maiden. But Mary was naturally disposed to brush the promise aside, since she had no husband (Luke 1:34). But the angel reassured her with wonderful words: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you, wherefore the holy thing that is to be begotten shall be called the Son of God." These words contain the heart of the great secret and put it with delicacy and awe, though quite as much beyond her comprehension as ours. The angel continued to give proof to Mary that the promise was true, that her child was really to be without a human father and to be the Son of God: "Now, behold, Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has herself conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who is called barren. Proof of it all is that nothing from God will be impossible." Here then was something tangible for Mary to grasp. Her response is full of dignity and nobility: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. May it happen to me according to your word." She rose to the height of the promise of the Lord with all the wonder and mystery in-

volved in her full surrender to the Lord's will. Vaguely she comprehended that she was to be the woman of destiny to fulfil the hopes of her people through the long years.

Chapter III

MARY CARRYING HER SECRET IN HER HEART

Could Mary tell her mother the words of the angel? Was her mother living? We are told nothing, though one infers that both father and mother are dead. We do not know the names of her father and mother, though legend gives them as Joachim of Nazareth and Anna of Bethlehem. It is probable that Mary belonged to the tribe of Judah and the lineage of David as Joseph did (Luke 1:32, 69; 2:5). The Syriac Sinaitic manuscript for Luke 2:5 has, "because they were both of the house of David." Mary was a kinswoman of Elizabeth (Luke 1:36), who belonged to the tribe of Levi, but that fact does not prove that Mary herself was of the tribe of Levi, for intermarriage between the tribes did occur. The family of Mary was probably a humble one as she was betrothed to Joseph the carpenter. That does not mean poverty, for the one or at least the chief carpenter of the town would naturally

be a man of solid and substantial standing. Mary was already living at Nazareth when the angel Gabriel appeared to her.

Mary could not and did not speak to Joseph about her wonderful secret. It was too sudden and too soon. There was only one person in the world to whom she could go, and she had to open her heart to some one. That person was Elizabeth down in the hill country of Judea. To her she quickly made her way and found a surprising welcome, for Elizabeth knew at once that Mary was the woman of God's choice and sang her hymn of praise to Mary (Luke 1:42-5):

"Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
And whence is this to me,
That the mother of my Lord should come unto me?
For, behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears,
The babe leaped in my womb for joy.
And blessed is she that believed,
For there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord."

The two women understood each other at once, as only women can at such a time. Elizabeth knew the message of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias. She knew that her own son was to be the forerunner of the Messiah. And now she was face to face with the mother of the Messiah. Elizabeth has no jealousy, but only joy, and calls Mary "the mother of my Lord." Elizabeth felicitates Mary upon her faith and predicts fulfilment of all that God has promised.

The response of Mary (Luke 1:46-56) is in the same high key, the *Magnificat* of Mary, as it has been called through the ages, from the first word in the Latin Vulgate version. A few Old Latin Manuscripts give Elizabeth as the author of this New Testament Psalm or Hymn, but it is clearly the work of Mary and in perfect harmony with her situation. Each may have written out the burst of song with which they greeted each other so that Luke got hold of the notes. Some even think Luke made up these songs and put them in the mouths of Elizabeth and Mary. But if so, Luke was surely a consummate artist, for they fit the part. Mary's song shows intimate knowledge of 1 and 2 Samuel, of the Psalms, of Job, of Isaiah, of Genesis, of Micah. She lets

out her soul now that Elizabeth really understands her. Her mind has wings and flies high with hope and joy as she outlines God's high purpose and condescending grace. In this poem Mary is revealed at once as a woman of deep piety, of imagination, of faith, of spiritual insight, just the woman of all the world to furnish the home atmosphere for the coming Messiah. Motherhood is the highest office offered to any one. Here is the chief mother of the race, the mother of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. She measures up to her high dignity, and no one should be allowed to take her crown of glory away from her.

It is probable that Mary remained with Elizabeth till John was born and Zacharias spoke his hymn of prophecy and praise when his tongue was loosed (Luke 1:57-80). It was now less than six months till Mary's own son was to be born, and she had to face the problem with Joseph because she was betrothed to him, and he was a just man. He would now know her condition without her telling him. It is impossible to exaggerate the embarrassment of Mary and the disturbance in Joseph's heart.

Chapter IV

JOSEPH'S DOUBT ABOUT MARY

Hatred of Jesus has let loose slander against Mary. She has been called in the Talmud the paramour of Panthera, a Roman soldier, as Jesus is termed a bastard in the same book. This is the lowest view of Mary, but it is not unlikely that some sharp tongues in Nazareth made her feel the force of this biting slur. Joseph at first apparently took this view of his betrothed, when he learned of her condition, and was planning "to put her away privily" and not "to make her a public example" (Matt. 1: 19), as he had a legal right to do. He "thought on these things" (Matt. 1: 20) of necessity as any "righteous man" would. Evidently Mary had not told Joseph how she came to be in this condition. And would he have believed her if she had done so? It is not hard to see the strain that came to Joseph instantly on the discovery that Mary, as he thought, had been untrue to him. "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to your side

Mary, your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit. She shall bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." So the angel spoke to Joseph, who sorely needed this reassuring word. The narrative in Matthew shows that Joseph changed his mind about her after the message of the angel of the Lord (Matt. 1:20), when he fully believed the word of the angel. Then he did take her to wife (Matt. 1:24). He married her before the birth of Jesus. That is the narrative in Matthew which denies the Jewish slander about Mary by claiming the Virgin Birth of Jesus. Joseph had no further doubts about the purity and uprightness of Mary, his betrothed wife. This is, therefore, the very first problem about which we have to make up our minds, viz., the upright character of Mary. Luke's story of the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26 to 2:20) differs greatly in the details from that in Matthew, but it agrees clearly in the one point of the Virgin Birth of Jesus and the consequent pure character of Mary. Even in the Gospels it seems that we have a reflection of popular suspicion about the birth of Jesus. At the feast of tabernacles the Pharisees sneeringly ask: "Where

is thy father?" (John 8: 19) as if they did not credit the common idea that Jesus was the son of Joseph. So in John 8: 41 they hurl at Jesus these words: "We were not born of fornication," as if meaning that Jesus was. This slur could refer to the Talmud story or to the idea that Jesus was begotten by Joseph before his marriage to Mary.

Chapter V

JOSEPH TAKING SUSPICION ON HIMSELF TO PROTECT MARY

The narrative in Matthew's Gospel puts the matter with all delicacy, but with perfect clearness and frankness. Joseph, according to the records in both Matthew and Luke, allowed himself to pass before the public as the father of Jesus even though it would mean that he had married Mary only a few months before the birth of Jesus. This act on the part of Joseph was the only possible way to give protection to Mary and to make it so that Jesus should be born in wedlock. But even so it would of necessity be understood that Joseph had taken advantage of Mary's betrothal to him. With the Jews betrothal was considered a sacred and binding estate, but it did not carry the actual or the legal privileges of marriage. According to Matthew it required the message of the angel of the Lord to convince Joseph that "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (1:20). That is

to say, it took supernatural proof to make Joseph believe in the supernatural birth of Jesus. No lover was ever placed in a harder position than was Joseph. After he had accepted the message of the angel, he was in a frame of mind in which he could listen to Mary's own story with credence and with confidence. Both Joseph and Mary must bear reproach if Joseph gave her the protection of marriage and legitimacy to the birth of the child. It is plain that Mary consented to the offer of Joseph with full knowledge of the reproach involved for both of them. But there was no other way. It was not possible for them to tell to their neighbours and friends the message of the angel to Mary and then to Joseph. It would have been received with incredulity. Nothing but perfect faith in each other made possible the marriage and the life of husband and wife. Perpetual virginity is not implied by Matthew 1 : 25, but perfect confidence is required. Joseph believed in the purity of Mary and in the birth of Jesus by the Holy Ghost. Nothing less than such faith on the part of Joseph would make possible his acceptance of the burden.

Chapter VI

Is Joseph the actual father of Jesus?

The Gospels frequently speak of Joseph as the father of Jesus. So Luke, who gives the account of the Virgin Birth, speaks of "his father and his mother" (Luke 2:33) and reports Mary as saying to the Boy Jesus: "Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing" (2:49). So in John 1:45 Philip describes Jesus to Nathanael as "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." People so took him as a matter of course and of necessity. In the synagogue in Nazareth the neighbours say of Jesus, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matt. 13:55). Later in the synagogue in Capernaum, when Jesus claims to be the Bread come down from heaven, the crowd will retort: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" (John 6:42).

The two genealogies of Jesus both speak of Jesus as "the son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23), though Luke adds "as was supposed," clearly meaning that this was not the actual fact, but

simply common acceptance of the situation. It may be, in fact, that Luke gives the actual genealogy of Mary, the mother of Jesus. But certainly Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, for he says, "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ" (Matt. 1: 16). It is true that the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript gives this passage differently and in a way that led some scholars at first to think that the actual paternity of Jesus by Joseph was meant. It reads as follows: "Jacob begat Joseph; Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin, begat Jesus, who is called the Christ." But a closer study of this reading shows that the scribe did not mean to deny the Virgin Birth of Jesus. In the very sentence Mary is called the Virgin and the passage about Joseph (Matt. 1: 18-25) is left intact wherein the supernatural birth of Jesus is definitely affirmed. Probably all that this reading of "begat" means is that Joseph was the putative father of Jesus as Moffatt in his *New Translation of the New Testament* so translates it. It is remarkable that the oldest scrap of papyrus of any portion of the New Testament contains the ordinary Greek text of Matthew 1:16. The papyrus (P′) is at the University

of Pennsylvania and belongs to the third century A.D. So far as the manuscript evidence goes, the Virgin Birth narrative in Matthew and in Luke cannot be seriously challenged.

But all the same a respectable number of modern Trinitarian scholars accept the common Unitarian view that Jesus is the actual son of Joseph and Mary. Some of these scholars hold to a form of divinity for Jesus though not that of essential union of two natures. They argue that God, who is Spirit, can enter a man's soul who is born in the usual manner. That is true, but it is not incarnation, but rather indwelling. One may be a God-filled man without being God manifest in the flesh. Christians are partakers in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), the new birth, but are in no sense on a par with God as Christ is represented in the New Testament. Those who affirm that Jesus is the actual son of Joseph, as of Mary, and who believe in the real deity of Jesus must affirm and believe as great a miracle as the Virgin Birth. Without a distinct and definite supernatural act by God at the time of the conception of Jesus one has only a purely human Christ unless he follows Cerinthus, who held that a supernatural *æon* came on the human Jesus at

his baptism and left him at his death. There are some who actually hold that Jesus, though merely human at birth, worked himself into deity by fellowship with God. But that is clearly using deity in two senses and after all we have only a deeply pious man in communion with God.

If we admit Joseph's actual paternity, we may as well face the facts before us. We not only discredit the two independent gospel narratives (Matthew and Luke) that tell the story of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, but we also throw suspicion on the character of Joseph and Mary, unless we reject all the known data entirely. But even so the Incarnation of Christ, so prominent in Pauline and Johannine writings, is left unexplained. The Virgin Birth is the only intelligible explanation of the Incarnation ever offered. We have it in two forms. That in Matthew is clearly from the standpoint of Joseph, while that in Luke is from the standpoint of Mary. They supplement, but do not contradict each other. They both call for belief in the supernatural aspects of the birth of Jesus. But the whole New Testament presents Jesus Christ as the Son of God, once Incarnate, and now Risen and on the Throne

of Glory with the Father. Both Paul and John picture Christ as existing before his Incarnation. If we get rid of the Incarnation, we have only a naturalistic social gospel left with no converting and transforming power for sinful men. If we believe in a real Incarnation of Christ, we cannot logically object to the Virgin Birth on the ground of the supernatural feature in it. If we take Joseph to be the actual father of Jesus, we are compelled to be illogical if we hold to the deity of Jesus, or to consider Jesus as merely a man.

It can be said that the early disciples did not all know of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. Quite true. In the nature of the case, it was not a subject for preaching and not often for conversation. The original disciples accepted Jesus as Messiah, as Son of Man, and finally as Son of God, but they have left no record of opposition to the Virgin Birth of Jesus. The Cerinthian Gnostics and the Ebionites of the second century denied it, and Ignatius in his Epistles (early second century) vehemently opposed their views. The silence of Mark is easy to explain. His Gospel begins with the public ministry of Jesus. One may as well argue from the silence of Mark

that he did not believe (like Marcion) that Jesus was born at all and suddenly appeared through the Holy Spirit at his baptism. The Gospel of John in 1:14 ("The Logos became flesh") seems to have the Virgin Birth narrative of Matthew and Luke in mind and to be giving a philosophical explanation of the birth of the Preincarnate Logos. Certainly Paul does not oppose the Virgin Birth and may refer to it in Rom. 1:3 (seed of David, son of God) and Gal. 4:4 (born of woman). In the case of Luke we have a physician, a scientist, a scholar, an historian who made careful research, who records the result of his investigations, a man who could very well have come in contact with Mary herself or with her circle, who knew her secrets. Every one treats the accounts of the Virgin Birth of Jesus according to his philosophy and theology. But, if he rejects the explanation offered by Matthew and Luke, he should know that he has not rid himself of the problem of the person and work of Jesus Christ. He still has to face the claims and the character of Christ and the influence of Christ on men to-day and through the ages. It is easy to deceive ourselves with mere words and to imagine that we really understand the mysteries

of life because we are sceptical of ancient records. But one in reality does not know one whit more about God or man because he denies the Virgin Birth of Jesus.

Chapter VII

THE GREAT EVENT AND THE FIRST INTERPRETATIONS

Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem when he had to go in response to the call of the Emperor Augustus for the first general census, as the Egyptian papyri now make plain. This first periodical census of Augustus came B.C. 8 and was repeated every fourteen years. It was probably delayed in Palestine by Herod's procrastination a year or two. Mary met her great hour with simple fortitude under the most untoward circumstances. The inn was crowded because of the census. Under the inn on the hillside, then as now, the donkeys and camels and cattle would be placed in stalls. In one of these stalls Joseph and Mary had to find lodging. No stranger in the inn offered to let Mary have his room. The birth of this Babe attracted no attention in the inn in Bethlehem nor in Jerusalem nor in Rome. And yet this event was to divide history into B.C. and A.D. Mary knew what the angel had

said. Joseph trusted and believed her. Mary faced her fate with no conveniences and no material comforts, but the Babe found his place in the manger where he lay wrapped in the swaddling clothes.

But a host of angels took note of the great event (Luke 2: 8-20). One of them startled the shepherds on the hills at night and told them of the birth in the City of David of "a Saviour, Christ the Lord" and gave the sign of the babe lying in a manger. The shepherds listened with rapture as the angelic choir took up the chorus:

"Glory to God in the highest and upon earth,
Peace among men of goodwill."

It was beyond their comprehension, but they could not restrain their curiosity and they were sure that the Lord had made it known to them (Luke 2: 15). So they came in haste and brought to Mary what the angels had said. The message was unutterably sweet to Mary, who "kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2: 19). It was grateful confirmation to her of the words of Gabriel, and it made her proud and glad to have this unexpected testimony in

her hour of glory and of need. Surely Joseph felt justified for his trust. But Mary "treasured together" these things "comparing them one by one with each other" as every mother in all the world has done. Surely Mary kept a baby-book of this most wonderful of all babies and would read over again and again the things jotted down. Now she had the words of the angel to her, the song of Elizabeth, the words of the angel to Joseph, and the message of the shepherds to put together, piece by piece, word by word, picture by picture. The roll of the coming years would pass before the mind of Mary as she looked into the face of her own "Little Lord Jesus" of whom Martin Luther was to sing so sweetly by and by. A mother can see all the world and heaven besides in her baby's eyes. And Mary had "all these sayings" to help her see God in the Babe of Bethlehem. The humble shepherds praised God for what they had heard and seen and went back to their tasks.

Mary rose to the duties of her task. When eight days old, the child was circumcised according to the law (Luke 2: 21). When the days of purification were over, Joseph and Mary appeared in the temple in Jerusalem to present the child to

the Lord according to the law (Luke 2:22-8) with the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. It is no wonder that Joseph and Mary were marvelling at the things spoken about the child Jesus by the old prophet Simeon in the temple. The previous recognition of Jesus had come directly from the angel to Mary, to Joseph, and to the shepherds except in the case of Elizabeth, whose peculiar mission had prepared her for the proper appreciation of Mary's child. But Mary seemed quite unprepared for the sudden and wonderful testimony of Simeon before she had said aught to him. She did not know that it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death till he should see "the Christ of the Lord" (Luke 2:26). So soon as Simeon laid eyes upon the child, he took him into his arms and blessed God for letting him see this day of fulfilment of that promise. He had a special and pointed word for Mary (Luke 2:34-5). Many will stumble and fall as many will rise because of this wondrous child, "that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Mary's child will be the touchstone of human hearts and of human history. It was all wonderful to hear, and Mary was entranced by what

she heard. But Simeon had a mystic prophecy for Mary's own life that was the thorn with the rose. "Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul." There was bitter in this sweet, how bitter she could not then know. Every mother expects and gets some bitter with the sweet in every child. So Mary may not have paid too close attention to the poignant warning of Simeon. At any rate that was in the future. The present filled her cup of joy to the full. Like every other mother Mary gloried in her new and wondrous babe. She was in the sunshine of joy and the clouds were far away. She and Joseph wondered at the insight of Simeon. The aged Anna added to Mary's bliss by her enthusiasm to all those present in the temple, "who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" as Simeon "was waiting for the consolation of Israel." In future days Mary would often look back to this happy occasion with gladness and hope.

Chapter VIII

MARY WATCHING THE CHILD GROW

We need not dwell upon the flight to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod the Great after the visit of the Magi who aroused the suspicion of Herod against a new rival to his will. Matthew gives no expression concerning the effect upon Mary of the homage to the child by the Wise Men. "They saw the young child with Mary, his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matt. 2: 11). Joseph and Mary had returned to Bethlehem after the brief visit to Jerusalem. No honour to her babe seems too great to a mother, and what the Wise Men did was only in accord with what the angel Gabriel had foretold and with what the shepherds had reported and with what Simeon had said in the temple. There was no public clamour over the birth of Jesus, but plenty of recognition by choice spirits who had the spiritual preparation and insight to

comprehend. The wrath of Herod foretold the coming struggle of the Messiah and was already illustrating the prophecy of Simeon concerning the sword through Mary's heart. With many forebodings and fears one can see Mary with the babe in her arms hurrying on donkey or camel while Joseph trudged by her side. The stay in Egypt gave Mary a chance and time to put together afresh her great experiences and place them in line with her hopes as she watched the child grow and wax strong (Luke 2: 40), full of life and laughter and joy. When the news came that Herod was dead, Joseph "took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel" (Matt. 2: 21), though not to Bethlehem, as he had at first planned, but to Nazareth (Matt. 2: 22f.; Luke 2: 39). When Joseph fled from Bethlehem, it was Herod's will that Herod Antipas should succeed him, but he once more made a sudden change in his will and Archelaus, the meanest of his sons that were left, was ruler of Judea. If Joseph and Mary could have settled in Bethlehem, they would have escaped the calumny that would greet them in Nazareth because of the circumstances of the birth of Jesus. But now it was plainly wisest to go back to Nazareth

in Galilee under the rule of Herod Antipas. Joseph had his home and his work in Nazareth and he had his living to make. It is significant that Joseph was led of God in his conduct through these trying years (Matt. 2: 22), but he stood by his responsibility and sheltered Mary and the child Jesus. Both Matthew and Luke are silent concerning the reception of Joseph and Mary with the child in Nazareth. The grace of God was upon the child Jesus and he grew rapidly in wisdom as the years came on (Luke 2: 40). Surely Mary watched with keenest interest each phase of the growing boy. Would he fulfil in reality all the promises held out to her and justify her for all that she had to undergo?

Chapter IX

MARY PUZZLED OVER HER BOY

The child was now the Boy Jesus. He kept on gaining (imperfect tense in the Greek, Luke 2:40) in years and strength and wisdom with the favour of God upon him in manifest ways. We are told nothing more till Jesus was twelve years old, when Joseph and Mary took him along on their annual visit to the passover in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41f.). The story of this visit, as told by Luke (2:41-53), reveals the relation between Mary and the Boy Jesus with simple clearness. Mary trusted the boy with his many relatives and friends. He had never disappointed or disturbed her before. It was not till the return trip when they had gone a full day's journey that the absence of Jesus was noticed, and diligent search failed to show him anywhere in the caravan. We can easily imagine the distress of Mary, that of any mother over her lost boy, and far more, for this boy was the hope of Israel and of the world, as Mary knew. After three days Joseph

and Mary found Jesus sitting in the temple in the midst of the teachers (probably in one of the schools of theology), listening eagerly to all that the rabbis said and asking pertinent and pungent questions. But Mary in great anxiety burst into the midst of all this learned theology with the reproving question: "Child, why did you treat us so? Look! Your father and I have been seeking you with anxious hearts." What else could she say? Her heart was almost breaking. What was theology to her anguish over her boy? Did ever a mother have a boy of twelve that had given her so little cause for anxiety as this boy had given Mary? Every new discovery today adds to the worry and increases the strain of the mother's heart, whether it is the movie or the automobile. The answer of Jesus mystifies Mary still more than his conduct in remaining behind in the temple had done. For the first time Mary saw her boy slipping beyond her control into a realm where she found it difficult to go. "How is it that you were seeking me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?" What strange words were these from a boy of twelve! Dimly Mary knew of course that the time would come when the boy became

conscious of his Messianic mission, but this answer was a shock even to her. How much she had told him of the wonderful facts and promises connected with his birth we do not know. Probably she had told him little, if anything, as yet. But here was Messianic consciousness in this boy of twelve. He said "My Father," not "Our Father." He already felt a peculiar relation to God and the necessity of taking this opportunity to be in his Father's house and to learn more about Him. The boy's yearning after knowledge and his destiny meets us here in an acute form side by side with the mother's failure to understand her growing boy. He was coming to the difficult age with boys and girls, and his own mother, the most wonderful of all mothers, did not fully comprehend the dawning of destiny in her son. Perhaps this breach between mother and boy is inevitable, but it seems a tragedy that at the very time of greatest need the mother is helpless and can only wait and pray and watch and love. But it is to the credit of this boy that he went back home with Joseph and Mary and continued subject unto them without murmuring against the limitations of his home circle. He had caught a glorious glimpse of his day dreams,

but he went back to Nazareth to bide his time and to grow up as the carpenter of Nazareth. "His mother kept revolving [imperfect tense] all these things [sayings] in her heart." What did it all mean to Mary's anxious heart as she was puzzled over the brilliant boy? She saw a chasm yawning between her and him at the very time that she was reaching out her hands to pull him back. But in Nazareth, in his home and in his shop, Jesus "continued to cut his way forward in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and with men." Mary could see all this with each passing year. He was going on towards the plan of God for him. That was clear. He was winning favour in Nazareth. The piety of this young man was winsome and wholesome while genuine and true. Mary's heart was happy with all the flutter of wonder and uncertainty. He was now a man, the carpenter of the town, succeeding Joseph, who had died. He had brothers and sisters around him. He was the mainstay and support of the family. Did Mary wish him to stay with her indefinitely? If so, what would come of her hopes and dreams about him as "the Lord's Anointed"?

Chapter X

Mary's Joy and Pride in Her Boy

Luke skips eighteen years before he tells us aught about Mary or Jesus. Matthew had omitted from twenty-six to twenty-seven years. We are to think of Jesus as about thirty years old when he heard the call of the Baptist and began his Messianic ministry (Luke 3:23). We are trying to face the work of Jesus from the standpoint of Mary and in sympathy with her problems and moods. She is kept in the background by all the Gospels, as is meet, especially after the public ministry of Jesus began. But her heart was there all the time. She was the most interested of all persons in every turn that came in popular favour or disapproval. We can only infer that, after the Baptist lifted up his voice in the wilderness and drew all classes to the Jordan, Mary told Jesus the main points that she knew about his birth and mission. If Joseph, as is likely, was already dead, there was no one else who knew and who could tell him. It is

possible, of course, that Mary only prayed alone and hoped for the best, as many mothers do, without talking to her son before he left for the Jordan. There would of necessity be an element of reserve and restraint, but my own feeling about Mary is that she told Jesus something, probably not all. Certainly the Messianic consciousness of the boy of twelve has grown till now as a man of thirty Jesus confronts the Baptist and accepts the homage of the Baptist along with his baptism (Matt. 3: 14) and hears the Father's own voice in approval of his entrance upon the Messianic task (Mark 1: 11; Matt. 3: 17; Luke 3: 22). Did Jesus now know that he was not the son of Joseph, but of his Father in heaven? It is curious that Jesus is never reported as speaking of Joseph. Mary was not with Jesus at his baptism or at Bethany beyond Jordan, where he won his first disciples, but she was with him and these same disciples at Cana in Galilee shortly afterwards at the wedding feast (John 2: 1-11). Here Mary takes the initiative, when the wine gave out, and tells Jesus. She meets with apparent rebuff at his hands: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? My hour is not yet come." There is no disrespect in

the use of the word "woman" instead of "mother," but this translation implies that Mary has stepped beyond her prerogative in making suggestions about his Messianic work. If so, it is time for her to learn that her son is officially of age and that his period of tutelage is past. That is always a delicate moment for every mother. It is hard for her to know when and where to hold back. But that time has to come and it had come for Mary. It is possible to give another turn to the Greek idiom and to make it mean: "What is it to me and to you?" "What have we to do with it?" That translation removes the touch of sharpness towards Mary, but does not fit in particularly well with what follows: "My hour is not yet come." But, however we take it, Mary was not displeased or disconcerted. She turned to the servants and said: "Whatever he may say to you, do it." Mary, like every mother, understood the moods of her son, for, in spite of his protest, Jesus acted upon her suggestion and gave orders for the replenishing of the wine by his first miracle. This incident does throw a light into the future in which Mary will slip further into the background as Jesus goes on in the full tide of his work. But there is a light backwards

also across the eighteen years of silence since Luke noted the obedience of the boy of twelve (Luke 2: 51). Jesus now asserts his independence since he has entered upon his mission, into which he must go alone, but at the same time he recognises the wisdom of the suggestion of his mother and acts upon it. So every son and every husband glories in his freedom and independence, but in his moments of wisdom follows the hints from mother and wife. There is nothing further said about Mary's pleasure in the miracle. She knew that the predicament of the hostess would appeal to Jesus as it did. Did Mary expect a miracle from Jesus? Had he told her what took place at the Jordan? Did she feel that, as the Messiah, he should show his power? Jesus appears to make a protest against forcing his "hour." And yet he wrought the miracle and it did manifest his glory, and the disciples now with Jesus had their faith perceptibly increased (John 2: 11). Surely the outcome immeasurably added to Mary's joy and pride in her wondrous son, who was the hero of this social hour and who had now shown by very act that he was, as she already knew, the Messiah of promise. Gabriel was right and all the rest, Elizabeth, the

shepherds, Simeon and Anna. And now Jesus could go his way, for his mother had seen the glory of the Lord upon him. She had her own hour of triumph toward which she had looked through all the long years. He already had a band of believers. The rest would all come in good time. So it was a happy family which "went down to Capernaum, he and his mother, and his brothers, and his disciples" (John 2: 12). Not yet had the brothers become jealous of Jesus. Mary was tasting with joy the first sweets of success.

Chapter XI

MARY'S FEARS

It is probably two years, if the public ministry of Jesus lasted three and a half years, before we have another definite word about Mary. She no doubt had been in Nazareth when Jesus came there (Luke 4: 16-31) after the early ministry in Jerusalem and Judea. That was a day of joy and sorrow. Her face would glow with pride as the eyes of all were fastened upon him in the synagogue with wonder at the words of grace that fell from his lips. But soon those very spellbound neighbours and former childhood friends were trying to hurl him headlong down the cliff to kill him. The prophecy of Simeon had come close to fulfilment, but Jesus slipped out of the crowd and Mary was left with a sword of doubt and fear in her side. Jesus now made Capernaum his home and his headquarters, and Mary would only hear the reports of his teaching and works. Jesus had gathered a group of

twelve apostles about him and had made two tours of Galilee, the second in company with the twelve and a group of women who helped support this band of preachers (Luke 8: 1-3). This campaign created much excitement throughout Galilee. Jesus wrought miracles of many kinds and relieved distress of every sort. Great crowds followed him at every turn. The rabbis (Pharisees) from Jerusalem felt that Jesus was definitely displacing them in the esteem of the people. It was impossible to deny and to disprove the miracles of healing. The scribes from Jerusalem took the position of admitting the miracles, but explaining them as really wrought by Beelzebub with whom Jesus was in league (Mark 3: 22; Matt. 12: 24). It was a desperate resort and called forth the sharpest retort from Jesus that they were themselves the "offspring of vipers" (Matt. 12: 34). Mary in Nazareth heard what the rabbis were saying about Jesus. She did not believe what they said. She knew what they did not. What was possible, she felt and feared, was that Jesus had suffered overstrain and needed rest and change. People were saying that the crowds were so great at times that he and they would not, or could not, eat bread (Mark 3: 20). Was it

possible that Jesus was really becoming unbalanced? "And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Mark 3:21). That experience has come to many another man and preacher. One's "friends" excuse one's peculiar conduct on the ground of undue excitement or temporary mental derangement. Poor Mary heard that the rabbis openly said that Jesus was in league with Beelzebub and that some even of Jesus' best friends had tried once to get him away from the crowds because they felt that he was beside himself. Mary's fears took the latter turn. It might be true that now Jesus needed her and that she must get him away for a time of quiet and rest. Picture Mary with her other sons coming to Jesus and standing on the outside of the house at the very time that some of his "friends" were there. Mary and her sons send a message "calling him" (Mark 3:31), because they themselves "could not come at him for the crowd" (Luke 8:19). So the word reached Jesus inside the house that his mother and his brethren were standing outside anxious to speak to him. There is no evidence that Mary had indicated the purpose for which she had come. Perhaps the pres-

ence of the brothers may have suggested something unusual. At a later time we read that they did not believe on Jesus (John 7: 5). They may already have made it plain that they took no stock in his Messianic pretensions. The atmosphere in Nazareth was now distinctly hostile to Jesus, and his brothers felt the force of it. It was a moment of high tension when Mary and the brothers sent their message to Jesus. He had just denounced the Pharisees as being guilty of the unpardonable sin in attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil. He had just claimed to be greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon. The air was electric when the message came. Jesus felt it keenly beyond a doubt that he was misunderstood in his own home, one of the bitterest of all experiences for a noble and high-minded man to have. Jesus not only did not go out to see and speak to his mother and brothers, but he actually brushed them aside as if they were now of secondary importance in his life. "Who is my mother? and who are my brothers?" (Matt. 12: 48). Certainly the brothers deserved the sharp rebuke and doubtless it served to help Mary throw off her fears about him. Later Jesus will put service to himself above father and mother

and wife and children and brothers and sisters (Luke 14:26). Here he acts upon that very principle. He himself felt so strongly the call to minister to the needy that he greeted them as his mother and his brothers, those who sat around him at that very moment (Mark 3:34). But Jesus, in doing this, shows the wider spiritual fellowship with all who do the will of God. At the moment the mother and the brothers of Jesus were failing in this very spiritual fellowship which Jesus was enjoying with his followers. They were trying to break this bond by their unjustified interference with his spiritual inheritance. Mary had made a misstep, not a fatal one, but a real one, as every mother feels that she does a thousand times with her children. We can picture Mary going back to Nazareth with her other sons, but her heart was with Jesus whom she had left behind without even a glimpse of him to see if aught was true that she had feared.

"Mary sat in the corner dreaming,
Dim was the room and low,
While in the dark, the saw went screaming
To and fro.

"Jesus and Joseph toiled together,
Mary's thoughts were far—
Angels sang in the wintry weather
Under a star.

"Mary sat in the corner weeping,
Bitter and hot her tears—
Little faith were the angels keeping
All the years."

Chapter XII

THE SWORD THROUGH MARY'S HEART

Events moved swiftly to their inevitable end and Mary had to stand aside in helpless anxiety. Jesus had not only asserted his independence of her authority long ago at Cana, but he had refused her misguided effort to get him away from his enemies, who accused him of being in league with the devil, and from his overanxious friends, who considered him out of his head. She could not try again to shape the current of events. And yet Mary could not be unconcerned. She had her other children who were still with her. But Jesus was her joy and her pride, her first-born, her hope. She lived for him and in him. She had dedicated her life to help him fulfil the prophecy of the angel Gabriel. She had done her part to make it so that he would be ready for his great task. The angel had promised her that he would sit on the throne of his father David and rule over the house of Jacob forever and be the Son of God (Luke 1:32-6). In maidenly simplicity

she had believed these words and had shaped her life in accord with them. We do not know precisely how she understood the throne of David, for the Pharisees taught that the Messiah would set up a political kingdom and throw off the hated Roman yoke. She probably knew that Jesus in Capernaum had definitely refused to go to Jerusalem and announce himself as king in place of Cæsar (John 6: 15). And yet he was, so people said, continually talking about the Kingdom of God and his disciples admitted that he claimed to be the Messiah, and they believed it. She knew that there was increasing hostility on the part of the Sanhedrin towards Jesus and his claims and aims. She apparently saw little of him in the last year or so of his ministry. It was actually reported that the Sanhedrin meant to kill him at the approaching Passover. Mary had seen Jesus become the hero of the Galilean populace and then leave Galilee to escape that same populace and the Pharisees and Herod Antipas. What was to be the outcome of it all? Is it any wonder that Mary is in Jerusalem at the Passover when the climax comes? She was drawn as by a magnet. She simply had to come.

But she is not alone. When the end came,

Mary was in company with her sister, whoever she was, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene (John 19: 25). These had taken a stand right beside the cross on which Jesus was dying. *Stabat Mater.* Who can enter the holy of holies of this mother's heart at this hour? Evidently Mary, the mother of Jesus, had been present in Jerusalem through all the dread ordeal of trial and crucifixion till now. It is comforting to know that she was with women who loved her and loved Jesus. Not one of the apostles was present save John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, though some scholars do not think that he was the Apostle John. This disciple, so close to the heart of Jesus, had been present at the trial and now at the cross. Jesus is dying, but he is well aware of the presence of his mother. He knows her unutterable love for him and the inexplicable tragedy of this hour. So Jesus looked down upon his mother, who stood beside the cross, and said: "Woman, behold thy son." The words were few, but they spoke volumes of affection and tenderness and unexpressed emotion. Here again in his address he calls her "woman." These words must have strengthened Mary as much as words could. Then to John Jesus said, "Behold thy

mother." It was a sacred charge, and John accepted it at once and "from that hour took her to his own home" (John 19:27) in Jerusalem. He led her away from the cross so that Mary should not see the very end, the terrible end. Then John came back and saw the piercing of the side of Jesus by the soldiers after he had died (John 19:34-7). Simeon's sword had now indeed pierced Mary's heart clean through. She was in the home of the Beloved Disciple, but that could not hide the stubborn fact of the death of Jesus on the cross as a criminal condemned by the Sanhedrin and by Pilate, the Roman Governor.

The Gospels tell us nothing about the emotions of Mary during the days when the body of Jesus lay in Joseph's tomb. She was not at the simple and hurried burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. She may have been with the women who watched by the tomb as the Sabbath drew on. But she had to pass through the lonely Sabbath when no one had any hope. We can only surmise that the Beloved Disciple did what he could to comfort this stricken mother, who had met the keenest disappointment that ever smote a mother's heart. Her faith and hope had car-

ried her to the highest possible things, this simple handmaid of the Lord, who had followed on as she was led. And now her blessed hopes were utterly blighted and blasted. The hardest burden to bear was hers during these dreary hours. She may have gone with the other women to visit the tomb towards the close of the Sabbath. It is more likely that she was too broken to stand that strain. She knew, as no other did, the perfect purity of Jesus and the heartless jealousy and cruelty of the ecclesiastics who had compassed his death. She knew that he was the Son of God, for the power of the Highest had overshadowed her. And yet God himself had not prevented the defeat of his declared purpose and plan. Mary's *Magnificat* reveals sheer faith in God's goodness and grace. What could she think now that God apparently had forsaken her and had allowed her to be mocked before the world as Jesus had been spat upon by his enemies? Her lips were more tightly sealed than ever concerning the mystery of his birth. His death was to her an even greater mystery. And yet I cannot think that Mary in her hour of woe railed against God. Her theology could not solve the riddle of the life and death of this wonderful

Son. She was crushed to the earth. How could she stand upright again and look the world full in the face? How could she carry on with such a load tugging at her heart? But it would not be like Mary to think of her as giving way to hopeless grief. She was still the most blessed of women in her own sad lot. She was the mother of the noblest and highest of men. He was still the Son of God although he had died. It was all too much for her reason as it is for ours. She could only do what every sorrowing mother has to do. She could look up to God in dumb and silent trust that could not dare to comprehend. Somehow she got through that Sabbath day.

Chapter XIII

MARY'S CONSOLATION

It is not certain that Jesus appeared to his mother after his Resurrection. It may be that he felt that the shock would be too great for her. It is certain that Mary Magdalene and the other women to whom Jesus did appear would tell Mary, his mother, the tremendous fact as gently as possible. We know that they did tell the eleven apostles who regarded their story as an idle tale, a mere ghost story, unworthy of credence, the fancy of excitable women (Luke 25: 11, 23f.). But Mary was a woman and knew how to estimate the witness of women. Moreover, she was the mother of Jesus and would have her own tests before she allowed hope and faith to revive in her heart, only to flicker and die again. It is possible that Mary was in the group of disciples who gathered in the room, probably in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, on the evening of the Sunday on which Jesus rose from the dead, to hear the testimony of Simon Peter,

who now confirmed what the women had already reported (Luke 24: 33-35). Then the two disciples came in from Emmaus with their additional witness that they too had seen the Risen Lord. We have no means of knowing. If she was not there, it was only because she waited for the fullest proof for her faith. As it was, those present were greatly disturbed by the actual appearance of Christ, alternating between faith and fear till the proof was conclusive, though they had already accepted the word of Simon Peter. If Mary was there, she suffered more than all. But in the end she was convinced past all doubt. The proof lies in the simple statement that, when the company of one hundred and twenty gathered in the upper room, probably the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, as before, to wait for the promise of the Father made by the Risen Lord before his Ascension, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers were present also (Acts 1: 14). The brothers were now whole-hearted believers in the Messiahship of Jesus. It was hard for these brothers to come to such faith in the elder brother whom they knew in the simple Nazareth home and in the carpenter's shop. But Jesus had appeared to James,

perhaps on the eventful first Sunday (I Cor. 15:7). James believed and told his mother and brothers. So here is once more a reunited family, and Mary's joy is complete. One may be allowed to hope that Mary was in that goodly company that was on Olivet when Jesus was caught up and borne from them into heaven (Luke 24:50-3).

Now at last Mary was coming to her own in the proof that Jesus was in reality the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, as the angel had foretold. She had been sorely tried. She had been bereft of all hope when God himself had apparently deserted her in allowing Jesus to be crucified. It is expecting too much of Mary to insist that she should have understood the necessity and the mystery of the Messiah's death. The apostles, after all the careful and repeated instruction of the Master, failed utterly to grasp the significance of his prophecy of his death. The blow struck them all dumb. Their theology was unable to find room for a suffering and dying Messiah till after the Resurrection of Jesus, when he opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Pentecost brought the illumination of the Holy Spirit as Peter's sermon shows. It seems plain that Mary went into

the Valley of the Shadow of Death with little knowledge of God's purposes of grace by means of the death of her Son. Her anguish was not then relieved by the insight that came afterwards. It is impossible to exaggerate the comfort and joy that came to her torn and troubled spirit when the tangled threads began to unwind and she could dimly see God's goodness in giving his Son, and her Son also, to die for the sins of the world. To be sure, Mary at first felt the supreme joy of knowing that Jesus was alive again. But the bigger aspects of his mission soon filled her horizon. He was now clearly carrying out the prophecy of Gabriel to her and, in truth, the full meaning of Mary's own *Magnificat* in her first glad joy. But, whether she now grasped much or little of the theological aspects of the death and resurrection of Jesus, she was in that joyful company in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon them all. She heard Peter's new interpretation of the life and death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It was all music to her ears. It meant to her soul what it could mean to no other. She had assumed her part in the great drama in a transport of joy. She had followed on in the light and in the darkness. And now the full glad day had come at

last. She could now piece together the odds and ends and hitherto hopeless incongruities in it all. There was still much beyond her comprehension, but faith for the future was easier henceforth.

As Christianity has made its way over the earth, the fame of Mary has grown. This was inevitable. Her life was literally wrapt up in the work of her Son. She was the greatest of mothers. She was the mother of the greatest of men, one called the Son of Man, but she was more. In some way still incomprehensible to us, as to her, she was the mother of the Son of God. The double mystery still baffles us, though our very reason compels acceptance and faith. Mary would not have us give her credit for aught save that she did her part well. The goodness and grace of God chose her as the channel for this mercy to the human race. So she occupies the highest pedestal among mothers, and mothers rank above all other persons. But this is not to place her above mortals because of the deity of her wondrous Son. She has her consolation in high duty nobly done and in the supreme character and service of her Son. That is her coronation. She needs no other.

Chapter XIV

THE ADORATION OF MARY BY ROMAN CATHOLICS

Multitudes of devout followers of Christ have come to adore and to worship Mary, the mother of Jesus. This was not true for several centuries. The early Christian leaders opposed this tendency when it started. With many to-day Mary stands as the mediator between God and man in the place of Jesus Christ. This is a distinct departure from New Testament practice and teaching. It rests upon the apocryphal literature that sprang up in the later centuries, not upon the New Testament. It is not the purpose of this article to controvert the position of those who worship the Virgin Mary. I reverence her for her noble womanhood, not for qualities attributed to her beyond the data in the Gospels. So I leave wholly to one side all theories of Mary's alleged Immaculate Conception, of her imagined Assumption, of her supposed power of Intercession in prayer. The evidence for these views is to me legendary and unreliable. Mary's right to

eminence among women rests wholly upon other grounds. It was natural, though wholly harmful, to credit her with elements of deity that do belong to Jesus, her Son. Mary came to be called the mother of God. That, of course, is a misnomer save in a limited sense. She was the mother of the Son of God in his human nature. She had an added glory in her fidelity to her real task as the mother of Jesus.

Chapter XV

NEGLECT OF MARY BY PROTESTANTS

But, if Roman Catholics have deified Mary, Protestants, as a rule, have neglected her. This is largely due to a reaction against the adoration by the Catholics. Protestants have often been afraid to praise and esteem Mary for her full worth lest they be accused of leanings in sympathy with the Catholics. Hence it has come to pass that the noblest of mothers is still the most misunderstood of mothers and of women. Cold neglect on the one hand is hers while adoring worship greets her memory in countless statues on the other hand. The God whom multitudes worship to-day is Mary. Protestants fight Mariolatry in order to stand up for the worship of Mary's Son, our Saviour.

Chapter XVI

SYMPATHY WITH MARY

It is worth while for all of us to look at the problem of Mary from her standpoint and to see how she faced the great test placed before her. We can look at the birth and life of Jesus with the eyes of his mother to some extent at least. That effort will enable us to do simple justice to Mary. It will help us also to understand certain aspects of the life of Jesus himself. No mother ever had a son like Jesus. No man ever had a better mother than Mary. Jesus deserved the best of mothers. The Eternal Father chose this maiden in the fulness of time for her high service to the Kingdom of God and to the race. Mary deserves the best from us all. She would say that we best honour her when we honour and worship and follow the lead of the Lord Jesus Christ who will not brook any rival in human hearts, not our own mothers, not even his mother.

One thing is certain. One who patiently and sympathetically travels the road that Mary trod

will be slow to cavil because difficulties are left that we cannot solve. Men with modern knowledge do not wish to be credulous any more than they wish to be hypercritical. The fundamental problem about the Virgin Birth of Jesus is the fact of the Incarnation. If one is convinced that the Son of God, who existed with the Father before he came to earth, really became incarnate as John says (John 1: 14) and as Paul says (Phil. 2: 5-11), he has little ground for complaining about the narratives in Matthew and in Luke. If Christ came in the flesh, he came somehow. It was a supernatural fact, if a fact at all. We owe our knowledge of Mary's great part in this supreme human drama to Matthew and to Luke. They have not really been discredited by modern discovery or research, by science or by Biblical scholarship. The true scientist is modest about saying what God can and cannot do. If we take the gospel narratives on their face value, it is possible to brush to one side exaggerations and indifferences and to look out upon Mary's problem with some of the light of Mary's eyes.

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